

# The Sounds of “The Bells”

*Richard Fletcher, WVPT*

## Overview

**Topic:** Poetry. This video-based lesson focuses on the ways rhythm, rhyme, and/or sound contribute to meaning in poetry. It introduces students to metrical and sound devices poets use to convey messages/meaning and helps students develop skills for analyzing poems for meaning. The students discover these devices by viewing a video on poetry, using the Internet to research and to analyze new poetry, and presenting new poetry to the class with computer presentation software.

## Length of Lesson

3 to 4 90-minute blocks (includes assessment)

## Video/Technology Hardware & Software

TV/VCR with remote control

*Simply Poetry* #6, The Music’s in Me  
computer with presentation software (Powerpoint, Corel Presentations, etc.) for each student group of four or five

computer with internet access for each student group of four or five

demonstration computer for the teacher

LCD projector and screen for the computer (or other projection device)

Websites:

<[www.poets.org](http://www.poets.org)>

<[www.bestpoetry.com](http://www.bestpoetry.com)> (subscription service)

<[www.poems.com](http://www.poems.com)>

<[www.poetry.com/links/poets.html](http://www.poetry.com/links/poets.html)>

<[poetry.about.com/arts/books/poetry/](http://poetry.about.com/arts/books/poetry/)>

<[epc.buffalo.edu/connects/metalist.html](http://epc.buffalo.edu/connects/metalist.html)> (You will want to preview this site before using with students. There are many useful links on this page; however, there are many others that will not be useful for this lesson.)

<[www.emule.com/poetry/](http://www.emule.com/poetry/)>

<[www.execpc/~jon/sites\\_indexes.htm](http://www.execpc/~jon/sites_indexes.htm)> (another page of poetry links)

<[www.spinfo.uni-koeln.de/~dm/poetry.html](http://www.spinfo.uni-koeln.de/~dm/poetry.html)> (another page of poetry links)

## Web Applications

Students will use the Web for information collection by researching other poems for analysis and presentation. In addition, students will use the Web to publish original poetry.

## Learning Objectives

The student will be able to:

- define meter, rhythm, iamb, onomatopoeia, rhyme, alliteration, connotation, consonance, assonance, and internal rhyme
- analyze poetry for meaning
- work cooperatively with a group of peers
- write original poetry (action plan)
- publish original poetry (action plan)
- use computer presentation software
- use the Internet to acquire information
- demonstrate effective public speaking skills

(This lesson addresses Va. SOLs English 9.2, 9.3, 10.1, 10.2, 10.5, 10.7, 10.9, 10.10, 11.5, 11.7, 12.5, 12.7)



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### Materials and Teacher Preparations

- variety of music selections (at least three would be ideal), such as:
  - heavy metal (Metallica, AC/DC, Guns and Roses)
  - beach/tropical ( Jimmy Buffett, Harry Belafonte, Beach Boys)
  - love song/slow song (Celine Dion, Barbara Streisand, Whitney Houston)
  - march/ceremonial (Wedding March, Pomp and Circumstance, Taps)
- a playing device for the music
- copy of “The Bells” by Edgar Allan Poe for each student (available in the *Simply Poetry* series teacher’s guide)
- copy of focus for viewing sheet for each student (attached)
- highlighter for each student

### Preparatory/Pre-Viewing Activities

Through class discussion, ask the students to construct a basic definition of rhythm and rhyme and to record these definitions on their focus for viewing sheet after the class has generated appropriate definitions. Sample Answers: Rhythm is the musical quality in poetry, produced by repetition and patterns (stressed/unstressed syllables, repeating grammatical structures, etc.). Rhyme is the repetition of accented vowel sounds, words that sound the same that are close together in a poem.

Play a variety of music clips for students, one at a time. After each song, ask students to describe the rhythm, rhyme, and/or sounds in the clip and why the artists may have decided to use those particular rhythms, rhymes, and sounds.

### Focus for Viewing/Other Technology

Distribute to students the Focus for Viewing hand-out with the focus questions. Say: You will now view a video that addresses the importance of the contribution of rhythm, rhyme, and sound to the meaning of a poem. I will stop the video occasionally so we can discuss a few of the questions on the

sheet at a time and you should not write down the answers to the questions while viewing; you can do this during discussion when the video is off and we discuss the questions as a class.

#### Time Cues

To synchronize your VCR with the time cues that are included with this lesson, zero/reset your time counter at the very beginning of the program, before the introduction and titles. Time cues are expressed as “minutes:seconds;” for example, 3:15 means three minutes and fifteen seconds.

#### Pause vs. Stop

When using a video interactively with students, teachers need to decide when to use **PAUSE** and when to use **STOP**. **PAUSE** the video when the anticipated discussion or activity will take less than two minutes. **STOP** for longer periods. Pausing for too long at one time can cause video heads on the VCR to become clogged which may require cleaning to correct.

### Viewing Activities

**1. Focus:** How are music and poetry related? (List student responses on the board.) As you watch this segment of the video, look for relations between music and poetry that we did not list. **START *Simply Poetry* #6**, at the point when the student is playing the piano at the beginning of the segment (about 1:05). **STOP** to check for comprehension after the music teacher says, “. . . or tell a story. Okay.” (about 1:57) Ask: What did you learn from the segment that is different from or similar to our list? Based on this first segment, how would you respond to question 1 on your focus for Viewing sheet: Poetry and music both use the fundamentals of what to convey their messages? (rhythm/sound) Now, what did you learn from the segment about why a composer organizes musical elements? (to express an idea, to describe an event, or to tell a story) Have students record correct answers from class discussion on their focus for viewing sheet (questions 1 and 2).

**2. Focus:** Listen for other ways poetry is similar to music. **RESUME. STOP** after the student says, “. . . you know, the pattern of sounds.” (about 2:09) Ask: What is another way that music is much like poetry? A composer creates a musical pattern and then does what. (repeats/varies) Have students record correct answers from class discussion on their focus for viewing sheet (questions 2 and 3). To enhance class understanding, ask students to identify and explain examples of current popular music that use these patterns of repetition and variation.

**3. Focus:** In this next segment, I want you to pay particular attention to the ideas and words related to meter. **RESUME. PAUSE** to check for understanding after the teacher says, “That’s meter. The pattern of accented and unaccented syllables.” (about 3:06) Ask: What is meter? (the pattern of stressed and unstressed syllables) Accept various responses and probe student answers to develop an accurate definition. Have students record the accurate definition on their focus for viewing sheet (question 4).

**4. Focus:** Listen for the most common sound in the English language and the definition of an iamb. **RESUME. STOP** after the teacher says, “. . . ta dum, ta dum, ta dum.” (about 3:37) Ask: What is the most common sound in the English language called? (an iamb) What is an iamb? (An unstressed syllable followed by a stressed syllable) Give students a hint of the definition if needed: How are the syllables in the ta dum pattern accented and unaccented when spoken out loud? How is meaning created in some poems with the use of the iamb? (by stressing key nouns and verbs) Have students record accurate answers on their focus for viewing sheet (questions 5 through 7). Ask students to share examples of words that follow the iambic pattern (examples: resume, response, discuss, explain).

**5.** Distribute a copy of “The Bells” by Edgar Allen Poe to each student. (Note to the teacher: Allow students time to read the poem to themselves so they are not doing so during the video.) Also, give each student a highlighter if you choose.

**6. Focus:** In the rest of the video, we will begin to discuss this poem and to apply some of the ideas we have just discussed. **RESUME. PAUSE** to check

for understanding after the student says, “. . . names the bell and describes its sound.” (about 4:45) Ask: How is Poe’s poem organized? (it is divided into four parts, the four kinds of bells/follows a pattern/begins and ends with same pattern/names each bell and describes its sound) Have students record answers on their focus for viewing sheet (question 8).

**7. Focus:** Pay particular attention to new poetry terms in the rest of the video segments and how these terms are applied to “The Bells” to assist the reader of the poem with meaning. **RESUME. STOP** to check for understanding after the teacher says, “Yes, like a little silver bell.” (about 6:13) Ask: What is onomatopoeia? (the use of words which imitate sounds) Accept various responses and probe student answers to arrive at a definition of onomatopoeia. Have students record the definition on their focus for viewing sheet (question 9). Say: Mark examples of onomatopoeia Poe uses in the silver bells (section I) and wedding bells (section II) of his poem. Have students share examples with the rest of the class (examples: tintinnabulation, tinkle, ring, gush, molten-golden).

**8. Focus:** In this next segment, pay particular attention to the concept of alliteration. **RESUME. STOP** after the teacher says, “. . . the repetition of a consonant sound like that is called alliteration.” (about 6:30) Ask: What is alliteration? (the repetition of initial consonant sounds) Accept various responses and probe student answers to arrive at a definition of alliteration. Have students record the definition on their focus for viewing sheet (question 10). Say: Mark examples of alliteration in the “alarum” bells section (section III) that the student and teacher discussed in the video and any new examples you can find. Have students share examples with the rest of the class (examples: “What a tale of terror, now their turbulency tells;” “How the danger sinks and swells;” “In the clamor of the clanging of the bells”).

**9. Focus:** This next segment of the video deals with connotations in the poem. Through class discussion, have students construct a definition before resuming the video. Ask: What do the words giggle and chuckle mean? (to laugh) Describe a giggle to me. Okay, now describe a chuckle to me. Although the

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words have the same meaning, they obviously suggest different things. They have different connotations. So, what is a connotation? (Connotations are the suggested meanings of words or sounds beyond their literal definition.) Have students record the definition in question 11 of the Focus for Viewing sheet. **Refocus:** pay particular attention to Poe’s use of connotation in this next segment of the video.

**RESUME. STOP** after the student says, “. . . kind of liquid with L’s and M’s” (about 6:56). Ask: What are the connotative sounds used in the wedding bells section (section II) of the poem? (long o sound, oo sound, the letters L and M) What feelings do these connotative sounds suggest? (smooth, mellow, peaceful, happy) **Refocus:** Now, pay attention to the connotative sounds Poe uses in the “alarum” bells section (section III) of the poem. **STOP** after the teacher says, “. . . and the long I and E.” (about 7:12) What are the connotative sounds used in the “alarum” bells section (section III)? (the hard sounds like K, D, and T with the R and S sounds) What feelings do these connotative sounds suggest? (sample responses: urgency, harshness, loudness, explosive) Accept various student responses and ask students to mark these examples in their copy of the poem.

**10. Focus:** In this last segment of the video, pay attention to the idea of a shift in a poet’s pattern.

**RESUME. STOP** after the teacher says, “. . . the shift grabs our attention” (about 7:36). Ask: How does a shift in a poet’s pattern help to create meaning? (grabs our attention) Accept various student responses and have students record class responses on their focus for viewing sheet (question 12).

### Post-Viewing Activities

**1.** Review with students the poetry terminology presented in the video (rhythm, meter, rhyme, alliteration, iamb, onomatopoeia, and connotation). Check for understanding by asking students to share definitions of these poetry terms.

**2.** With students, review the aspects of rhythm, rhyme, and sound discussed in the video by asking students to share rhythm, rhyme, and sound devices used in sections I, II, and III of the poem.

**Sound:** Ask: What aspects of sound does Poe use in section I of the poem? In section II? In section III? (Students should provide examples of alliteration, onomatopoeia, and connotation, using the correct terminology.) Probe student answers to bring out aspects and examples of alliteration, onomatopoeia, and connotation. Why do you think Poe chose these aspects of sound for his poem? How do they contribute to the meaning of his poem? How do these devices help the reader understand Poe’s poem? (Poe wants the reader to “hear” the different sounds of the bells, to understand the different purposes of the bells, to identify how the different sounds relate to the purpose of each type of bell)

**Rhyme:** Ask: What are some of the rhyming words Poe uses in section I? (tinkle, oversprinkle, twinkle) Why would he choose these type of words for this section of the poem? (They are light, sweet, musical, happy.) What are some of the rhyming words Poe uses in section II? (night/delight, notes/floats, tune/moon) Why might he choose these words for this section of the poem? (These words have pleasant, smooth sounds/They are again musical and happy.) What are some of the rhyming words Poe uses in section III? (speak/shriek, roar/outpour, jangling/wrangling) Why would Poe use these words in this section of the poem? (These words are harsh, unpleasant, raucous, jolting, shocking.)

**Rhythm:** Read the first five lines of section I, II, and III for the students, snapping your fingers in the rhythm as you read. After doing this, refer students back to question 3 on their Focus for Viewing sheet (A composer creates a musical pattern and then repeats it and varies it). Ask: Does Poe do this in his poem? What do you notice about the beginning of each of these stanzas of the poem? (He repeats a regular, identical rhythm.) What does Poe do in each section of the poem after the first five lines? (He varies or shifts the pattern/writes more/uses more rhyming and repetition.) Point out again to the students these similarities between a composer and a poet.

**3.** Break students into small groups of four or five. Say: Now I want you to mark/highlight other aspects of rhythm, rhyme, and sound in section IV of “The Bells.” Mark or highlight each example you

find and label it with the correct sound device or the reason for a particular rhythm or rhyme pattern. Be ready to explain how the devices you mark contribute to the meaning of the poem.

When students are finished marking/discussing section IV of the poem, discuss their work as a class. Ask students to share rhythm, rhyme, and sound devices they marked and how these devices add to meaning and to understanding of this section of the poem (this type of bell).

4. Define other rhythm, rhyme, and sound devices for the students, devices that were not presented in the video: consonance (the repetition at close intervals of the final consonant sounds of accented syllables or important words), assonance (the repetition at close intervals of the vowel sounds of accented syllables or important words), repetition, and internal rhyme (a rhyme in which both of the rhyme words occurs within the line) are some examples. Have students record these definitions on the bottom or the back of their focus for viewing sheet. Using the same group procedure as before, ask students to mark and share examples of these other rhythm, rhyme, and sound devices in “The Bells.”

## Assessment

In groups, have students use the Internet to find another poem in which they believe the rhythm, rhyme, and sound contribute to its meaning. Have student groups analyze their poems for rhythm, rhyme, and sound devices and establish ways these devices contribute to the poem’s meaning. Then have students put their information into a computer presentation (Powerpoint, Corel Presentations, etc.) and present their poem and their analysis of the poem to the class.

## Action Plan

1. Have students write an original poem in which the rhythm, rhyme, and/or sound devices contribute to its meaning. Publish the poem on the school website or on an online publishing site (for example, <[www.aopoetry.com/zebra.html](http://www.aopoetry.com/zebra.html)>)

2. Invite a poet into the class to conduct a poetry writing seminar with the students. Consult local universities for poets or connections for finding poets.

## Extensions

**Social Studies:** Research historical background of Poe and the ways bells were used in his historical period.

**Technology:** Using the Internet, have students chat online with a famous poet or share their original poetry with other school classes around the country,

## Language Arts:

- Give each student a copy of a poem and ask them to mark and label the rhythm, rhyme, and sound devices used in the poem. After marking and labeling the poem, students should write a short essay explaining how these devices contribute to the poem’s meaning. Good poems to use with this activity are “O What Is That Sound” by W. W. Auden, “Jabberwocky” by Lewis Carroll, “The Highwayman” by Alfred Noyes, and “The Cremation of Sam McGee” by Robert W. Service.

- Discuss/analyze other poetic meters in poetry (trochee, spondee, dactyl)

- Play the rest of the video segment of *Simply Poetry* #6, which is a complete reading of the poem, “The Bells.”

**Science:** Research the way bells produce sound and how sounds are altered from bell to bell.

**Music:** Have students bring in some of their favorite songs. Play the songs and ask students to explain why the artists chose certain rhythms, rhymes, and sounds. Discuss how certain types of songs utilize common patterns.

## About the Author

### Richard Fletcher

After graduating from James Madison University in 1991, Rich began teaching 8th-grade language arts

in Shenandoah County, Virginia, where he has been teaching ever since. He currently teaches high school English, including English 9, English 10, AP English, and journalism. In June 2000 Rich will complete two additional education degrees: Masters in school administration and an additional teaching certification in instructional technology. As a teacher and as a student, Rich has always felt it is important to utilize the expertise of educators to assist and educate teachers. He has presented at two Virginia Middle School Association conferences; developed, tested, and published curriculum for Appalachia Education Laboratory; and headed an English vertical team charged with the task of aligning the English curriculum in grades 6-12. In the future he hopes to teach computers and possibly become an assistant principal.

# **FOCUS FOR VIEWING**

## **THE SOUNDS OF "THE BELLS"**



DEFINE:

RHYTHM

RHYME

1. POETRY AND MUSIC BOTH USE THE FUNDAMENTALS OF \_\_\_\_\_ AND \_\_\_\_\_ TO CONVEY THEIR MESSAGE.
2. WHY DOES A COMPOSER ORGANIZE MUSICAL ELEMENTS?
3. A COMPOSER CREATES A MUSICAL PATTERN AND THEN \_\_\_\_\_ IT AND \_\_\_\_\_ IT.
4. WHAT IS METER?
5. WHAT IS THE MOST COMMON SOUND PATTERN IN THE ENGLISH LANGUAGE CALLED?
6. WHAT IS AN IAMB?
7. HOW IS MEANING CREATED IN SOME POEMS WITH THE USE OF THE IAMB?
8. HOW IS POE'S POEM ORGANIZED?
9. WHAT IS ONOMATOPOEIA? MARK THE EXAMPLES POE USES IN THE WEDDING BELLS SECTION.
10. WHAT IS ALLITERATION? MARK EXAMPLES OF ALLITERATION IN THE "ALARUM" BELLS SECTION THAT THE STUDENT AND TEACHER DISCUSSED IN THE VIDEO.
11. WHAT IS CONNOTATION? WHAT ARE THE CONNOTATIVE SOUNDS USED IN THE WEDDING BELLS SECTION OF THE POEM? THE "ALARUM" BELLS SECTION?
12. HOW DOES A SHIFT IN A POET'S PATTERN HELP TO CREATE MEANING?